

IFATE APPROVALS AND POLICY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting title: IfATE Approvals and Policy Assurance Committee
Meeting date: 08 November 2023
Protective marking: Official

Board members present: Dr Kate Barclay (KB) (Chair) (via teleconference); Neil Morrison (NM) (items 1-3) (via teleconference); Bev Robinson CBE (BR) (via teleconference).

IfATE officials present: Rob Nitsch, Delivery Director (RN); Dr Rachel Cooper, Strategy Director (RC); Carmel Grant, Deputy Director, Commissioning and Development (CG); Simon Love, Head of Governance; James Gordon-Cumming, Head of Economic Analysis (JGC) (item 4 only); External Stakeholder Communities Manager (CF) (item 3 only); Governance Manager (Secretariat).

Other stakeholders present: Apprentice Panel Chair (item 3 only) (AW); Apprentice Panel member (item 3 only).

Apologies: Professor Malcolm Press (MP); Beth Chaudhary, Strategy Director.

Item 1. Welcome, introductions and conflicts of interest

1. The Chair welcomed members and officials to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from committee member Malcolm Press and Beth Chaudhary, Strategy Director. The committee asked that the secretariat contact any committee members not present to ask if they wished to make any comment on the papers.
2. The Chair asked board members whether they had any new declarations of conflict of interest to make. The Chair reminded board members that should a potential or actual conflict arise by virtue of their other interests (outlined in the declaration of interests) then it must be raised at the outset of the relevant meeting which deals with the issue giving rise to the actual or potential conflict. No new declarations were made.

Item 2. Minutes and actions from the last meeting

3. The draft minutes of the 13 September APAC meeting were approved without amendment.
4. Members reviewed the action log and noted the progress against open actions. Members noted that some actions related to the future work programme of other committees or panels and asked that these actions were not formally closed until the relevant items had been considered by the appropriate body.

Item 3. Apprentice Panel and Technical Qualification Student Forum report

5. The Chair welcomed AW, the Chair of the Apprentice Panel, and HC, Apprentice Panel member, to the meeting. AW and HC provided an account of the work undertaken by the Apprentice Panel over the last year. Much of the Panel's activity related to the six recommendations arising from the [2022 Apprentice Panel Survey of Apprentices](#).

6. Recruitment to the panel had been more challenging in some routes such as protective services, care services and creative and design, than in routes such as business and administration, and engineering and construction. However, the Apprentice Panel's membership now had representation from 14 of the 15 occupational routes.
7. The Apprentice Panel had contributed to a number of IfATE workstreams such as apprentice user testing of the new occupational maps. In addition, the Panel had worked with the Department for Education (DfE) on messages for students on GCSE and T Level results days, and regularly attended a UCAS advisory group.
8. Members noted that the response rate to the recent Apprentice Panel recruitment campaign had been lower than the previous campaign despite a widespread social media campaign, and asked if there were route- or occupation-specific circumstances that might restrict an individual's ability to apply. AW advised that they had recently attended an apprenticeship ambassador network conference and would try to use this and similar events to request support for future campaigns.
9. AW and HC set out some of the Apprentice Panel's planned work and future ambitions. Members advised that the Apprentice Panel might best be able to contribute to some of the larger proposed workstreams by working with other bodies and stakeholders rather than reiterating work already done elsewhere. Members suggested that the Apprentice Panel consider and analyse data sources that already existed in formulating their proposals and recommendations and that the key benefit for IfATE was informing product apprenticeship design and review.
10. Members noted that they were impressed with the update they had received from the Apprentice Panel members and the views presented, and that this gave them significant confidence in the Panel's work. AW and HC wished to note the Apprentice Panel's gratitude for the support provided by the External Stakeholder Communities Manager (CF) at IfATE.
11. CF reported that the Technical Qualification Student Forum (TQSF) comprised eleven members across the four T Levels being taught in June 2023, and that the forum had given feedback to IfATE on operational issues such as sharing views on progression profiles. Difficulties had however been encountered in the recruitment and retention of members of the TQSF, and alternative forms of engagement were being considered in collaboration with the DfE. Members endorsed this approach and welcomed the proposal to visit T Level students in their own educational establishments.
12. The Chair thanked AW and HC for their contribution to the meeting and for their ongoing work for the Apprentice Panel, and suggested that the Route Panels may be able to utilise the Apprentice Panel's expertise when undertaking route reviews.

Item 4. Impact Assessment report

13. JGC introduced the impact report, which focused on learner outcomes, stakeholder perceptions and value for money. Some measures used in the report were numerical and some were matters of professional judgement.
14. The report identified three main areas of concern: T Level commercial delivery in relation to start numbers, apprenticeship completions and apprenticeship costs. IfATE was aware of these areas of concern and was working with DfE to address them.

15. Members thanked JGC for the good work which had been invested into the impact report, and confirmed their support for deep-dives in 2024 focused on withdrawals across T Levels and Apprenticeships and T Level assessment performance.

Item 5. Higher Technical Qualifications

16. CG introduced the item, which provided APAC with an update on the challenges encountered in the HTQ programme. These had, for the most part, been similar to those encountered in the T Level programme. 175 HTQs had so far been approved, with a further 90 in the process of being considered for approval. The 2023 cycle had been the most significant in terms of number of qualifications per cycle, demonstrating that interest was growing.

17. CG highlighted that the number of learners on programme was unlikely to increase significantly until there was a sufficient range of HTQs offered. In order to facilitate this, IfATE had modified its processes to enable two cycles per year going forward, and it was hoped that the Lifetime Learning Entitlement might help to stimulate demand.

18. Members noted that further education institutions, rather than higher education institutions, were originally envisaged to lead on HTQ delivery, and asked whether this had been the case. CG advised that emerging data suggested that this was the case. Additionally, CG advised there was some evidence to suggest that T Level students were progressing onto HTQs.

19. Members agreed that they were assured that IfATE understood the challenges in the HTQ programme and was working to address these.

Item 6. Operational report

20. RN provided an update on IfATE's operations and delivery performance, including on the new Advanced British Standard (ABS) recently announced by the Prime Minister. Both IfATE and the DfE were investing significant energy into advising on the proposals for ABS.

Item 7. Any other business and confirmation of focus for next meeting

21. The Chair thanked members and officials for their participation and confirmed that the next APAC meeting would take place on 10 January 2024, with a focus on ensuring employer satisfaction and engagement.

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